

Fact Sheet



California Department of Health Services | Cancer Detection Programs: Every Woman Counts

cervical cancer

*Cervical cancer is nearly 100% preventable with regular Pap tests, which can detect abnormalities before they become cancerous.*¹

The Good...

- The Pap test, one of the most successful of all cancer screening tests, has saved thousands of lives since it was introduced in the 1950s.²
- Fewer California women are getting cervical cancer. From 1988–1999, invasive cervical cancer incidence declined in each of the four major race/ethnic groups.³

The Bad...

- In the United States, 10,520 cases of cervical cancer will be diagnosed in 2004, and 3,900 women will die from the disease.⁴
- In California, approximately 1,670 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2005, and 465 women will die needlessly from the disease.¹²
- In national statistics that consider geographic variations, ethnic disparities, and other patterns, California consistently has higher rates of cervical cancer than other regions.¹¹
- Uninsured women are less likely than insured women to be screened, making them most at risk to develop cervical cancer. The risk of developing cervical cancer is 3 – 10 times greater in women who have not been screened, as screening may find pre-cancerous cells that can be treated.⁶
- Uninsured patients are more likely to die prematurely because of delayed diagnosis.⁷
- A common cancer among Asian and Hispanic women, cervical cancer is a major problem for many women recently immigrating to California.⁵

...And The Not So Pretty

- Between 60% and 80% of American women with newly diagnosed invasive cervical cancer have either not had a Pap test in the past five years or have never had one.⁸
- 800,000 California women (age 18 and older) who need to be routinely screened, have never had a Pap test.¹

Age, Income, Health Insurance Status Trends & Patterns

- The average age of women diagnosed with the disease is between 50 and 55 years old – primarily because they are less likely to have routine exams.²

- About one out of five uninsured, low-income women age 40 and older screened by *Cancer Detection Programs: Every Woman Counts* never or rarely received a Pap test. This is the group where over 30% of invasive cervical cancers can be diagnosed.⁹
- Approximately one out of every six uninsured women have never had a Pap test, compared to only one out of every seventeen women with health insurance.¹
- Cervical cancer screening is increasing among lower income women. In 1999, 84% of lower income women reported having a Pap test in the prior three years, compared to 76% in 1992.¹

Ethnic Trends & Patterns

The risks of developing and dying from cervical cancer differ among ethnic groups, as does the frequency of getting regular cervical cancer screening.

African-American

- Less than half (49%) of the cervical cancers diagnosed in 2000 were in the early stages.⁵
- From 1988-1998, the average decrease per year in cervical cancer incidence was 4.2%. Most of the decrease has taken place since 1992.³
- In 2002, 89% of African-American women ages 18 and older in California had a Pap test in the prior three years.⁵

Asian/Pacific Islander

- Asian/Pacific Islander women have the second highest risk for developing cervical cancer.^{3,5}
- 48% of the cervical cancers diagnosed in 2000 in Asian/Pacific Islander women were in the early stages.⁵
- From 1988-1998, the average decrease per year in cervical cancer incidence was 3.5%.³
- Asian/Pacific Islander women were the least likely to report having recently received a Pap test.¹ In 2002, 75% of Asian/Pacific Islander women in California, ages 18 and older, had a Pap test in the prior three years.⁵
- The cervical cancer incidence rate in Vietnamese American women is five times higher than among white women, according to national statistics. Cervical cancer is the most common invasive cancer for Vietnamese women, while breast cancer is the most common invasive cancer for all other groups.¹⁰

Hispanic/Latinas

- Latinas have the highest risk for developing cervical cancer in California – more than twice as high as white women. Latinas represent one-third of invasive cervical cancers diagnosed each year in California.³
- 52% of the cervical cancers diagnosed in 2000 among Latinas were in the early stages.⁵
- In 2002, 84% of Latinas in California, ages 18 and older, had a Pap test in the prior three years.⁵

White (Non-Hispanic)

- 55% of the cervical cancers diagnosed in 2000 in white women were in the early stages.⁵

- From 1988-1999, cervical cancer incidence declined less among white women in California, compared to other ethnic groups. The average decrease per year was 2%.³
- In 2002, 88% of white women in California, ages 18 and older, had a Pap test in the prior three years.⁵

Note: The category "American Indian" is not included in the above due to the small sample size of the available population in this category and lack of relevant data from reputable data sources.

Early Detection - The Best Protection

- Regular Pap tests, which detect abnormalities before they become cancerous, are essential in preventing cervical cancer.^{1,2}
- Early detection of cervical cancer improves the chances of survival. When cervical cancer is localized (early stage), 91 of every 100 women will survive for at least five years. Once the cancer has spread to other parts of the body, the five-year survival rate is 13%.⁵
- All women should receive annual Pap tests about 3 years after they become sexually active, but no later than age 21. After a woman has had three or more consecutive normal annual examinations, the Pap test may be performed less frequently based upon discretion of the physician in collaboration with the patient.⁵

Sources:

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